

Hanford Openness Workshops *Fact Sheet*

Hanford Openness Workshops

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*The Hanford Openness
Workshops are a
collaborative effort
among the U.S.
Department of Energy-
Richland Operations
Office, the Consortium for
Risk Evaluation
with Stakeholder
Participation, the
Oregon Office of
Energy, the Washington
Department of Ecology,
and regional Tribal
and citizen
representatives.*

Access to Documents

Background

It is the mission of the Hanford Openness Workshops (HOW) to resolve issues impeding the availability of information important to public health, the environment, understanding and decision making at the US Department of Energy's (DOE) Hanford nuclear site in southeastern Washington state. This Fact Sheet outlines participants' efforts to recommend improvements in document access at Hanford.

Millions of documents have been created at the Hanford Site since plutonium production began in 1944. A good portion of these documents contained classified information and were protected from public disclosure. Many of these records have since been declassified and made available. Some remain classified to protect national security. Others are not released under certain circumstances because they contain personal information protected under Privacy Act laws.

Declassified Does Not Equal Accessible

A critical component of openness is making information publically available and accessible. Ironically, documents that have never been classified are often times more difficult for the public to access than formerly-classified information. A large portion of Hanford-generated documents detail routine, day-to-day activities at the site, and while not classified, are often not easily accessible. With a workforce of over 10,000 people, hundreds of thousands of new pieces of information are generated annually by staff at Hanford. Federal law requires that this information be managed, regardless of its form. The Workshops have found that much of openness depends not on declassification, but on access to information.

National Archives Protocol

Information that is worth preserving because it has some kind of value is considered "record material." These records are retired (moved from working files to storage) and disposed of only through specific procedures established by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). During most of Hanford's history, records were routinely destroyed this way. Since December 1990, Hanford has been operating under a moratorium on destruction of any record material. This moratorium was enacted in large part because studies into Hanford's past environmental releases of radioactive material require documents dating back to the start of operations.

There are currently 24,750 cubic feet of material retired and stored at Hanford, and an additional 48,525 cubic feet of material retired and stored at the Federal Records Center in Seattle, Washington, which is operated by the National Archives. Records are stored in boxes that measure about one cubic foot, and contain between 2,500 to 3,000 pages of material.

Current Classified Archives

The material now stored at Hanford includes 888 classified boxes of retired records. Not all of these boxes are filled with classified material. If even one document in a box is classified, the entire box is treated as classified. The Records Center in Seattle does not contain any classified records from Hanford.

Records management practices have evolved over the last 55 years at Hanford. Techniques to archive and retrieve records are now more sophisticated. For this reason, newer records are often easier to locate than older records. Numerous Hanford contractors—each with its own independent records management system—further complicate information management and retrieval. Two things help records managers at Hanford to maintain order among these historical records:

1. All contractors operated under a common set of rules established by the National Archives and the Department of Energy
2. The Department of Energy remained the “owner” of all the records retired at Hanford.

Classified documents are handled with special protections, both as working files and when they are retired. Classified working records are stored in specially protected repositories where they can be easily accessed by staff. Retired classified records are stored in two storage facilities at Hanford. Security clearance is needed to enter classified areas of these buildings. With the exception of the special security they require, the classified records are subject to the same records management procedures as unclassified records.

Classified Records Need Review

Many classified records have not been reviewed since they were retired in the 1950s–1980s, when classification requirements were different than they are now. Prior to release to the public, all documents must be reviewed not only for classification, but for other sensitive information such as personal, proprietary and attorney-client privileged information. Hanford is currently engaged in a multi-year project to review and declassify as many historical classified documents as possible.

Public Access to Hanford Records

There are a variety of existing sources for Hanford records. Below is a listing of those most often used and the kinds of records available.

DOE Public Reading Room

2770 University Dr., Room 101-L

Consolidated Information Center

P. O. Box 999, H2-53

Richland, WA 99352

phone: (509) 372-7443

e-mail: reading_room@pnl.gov

Schedule: Monday–Friday 10 AM–5 PM

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The Reading Room has long been the central location for hard copy documents that Hanford has identified as having interest to the public. Its collection exceeds 35,000 documents and includes Occurrence Reports, major Hanford contracts and evaluation reports, DOE Orders, current and historical Hanford Environmental Monitoring Reports, Hanford Environmental Dose Reconstruction Project materials, Waste Management Reports, documents related to the Tri-Party Agreement and the Hanford Advisory Board. Internet access is available at the Reading Room for Hanford-related searches. The Reading Room's catalog is available on the Internet at <http://rrcatalog.pnl.gov>.

Internet - Hanford Home Page, www.hanford.gov

This electronic resource is available to anyone with Internet access. It contains general information on Hanford and its history, the Hanford phone, e-mail directory, an acronym list, information on projects such as the Fast Flux Test Facility, Tank Waste Remediation System (TWRS), TWRS Privatization, the Hanford Advisory Board, the Tri-Party Agreement and the HOW. It provides a calendar of upcoming meetings and comment periods for decisions under review. It also contains accident reports, environmental assessments, environmental impact statements and links to hundreds of other DOE and stakeholder web pages.

Hanford Technical Library
2770 University Drive
Consolidated Information Center
P. O. Box 999, P8-55
Richland, WA 99352
phone: (509) 372-7430

The Hanford Technical Library combined collection totals nearly one million books, journals and technical reports. In addition, user computer stations provide access to other electronic library resources.

Tri-Party Agreement Information Repositories:

- University of Washington, Suzzalo Library, Government Publications Room, FM-25, Seattle, WA 98195, (206) 543-4664
- Portland State University, Branford Price Millar Library, SW Harrison and Park, PO Box 1151, Portland, OR 97207, (503) 725-3690
- Gonzaga University, Foley Center, East 502 Boone, Spokane, WA 99258, (509) 328-4220, ext. 3844
- DOE Public Reading Room, 2770 University Drive, CIC Room 101-L, H2-53, Richland, WA 99352, (509) 372-7443

The Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) between DOE-Richland, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology is a unique, legally-binding agreement that is the roadmap for cleanup at Hanford. Certain documents related to the TPA are required to be made available at these Repositories,

such as the Community Relations Plan, Public Notices, Remediation Investigations, Feasibility Study Workplans, Closure Plans, meeting summaries and newsletters.

Hanford Declassified Document Retrieval System
www2.hanford.gov/declass/declass.htm

Contains hundreds of thousands of pages of previously-classified Hanford documents, available as scanned images. It is updated as more documents are declassified and become available.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests
Freedom of Information Act Officer, A7-75
Department of Energy
P. O. Box 550
Richland, WA 99352

When information is not otherwise publicly available, anyone can request documents through the Hanford Freedom of Information Officer. Requests must indicate that the request is being made under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), identify the documents being sought so that an employee familiar with the subject can locate them in a reasonable amount of time, and must express a willingness to pay costs for search time and duplication of documents. A public, non-commercial requester can get the first 100 pages and two hours of search time at no cost. Search and retrieval of classified documents requested through FOIA is no different than for unclassified documents. Classified documents, however, undergo a declassification review. A FOIA requester does not need to know where records are stored to make a request.

Public Request Service
public_requests_hanford_docs@rl.gov
(509) 376-1418

Allows individuals to obtain copies of a variety of cleared documents generated at Hanford including reports, speeches, procedures, videos, and photos. The Service searches a number of databases, charges \$.10/page for most paper documents and duplication costs for other forms of information. If the Service is unable to provide a requested document, the requester may be referred to the FOIA process.

Hanford Public Participation Program

Hanford defines public participation as open and ongoing communication, formal and informal, between its Richland Operations Office (RL) and its stakeholders. The policy is intended to ensure that major decisions are made with the benefit of public input. RL programs actively seek, consider, and incorporate or otherwise respond to stakeholder views. Public meetings are held throughout the Northwest at which documentation specific to the subject of the meeting is made available.

For more information, see the ***Hanford Openness Workshops 1998 and 1999 Reports***, available via the HOW address or electronically at the HOW web site.